

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

All THE YEAR ROUND

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WILLING TO DIE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROSE AND THE KEY."

CHAPTER VIII. THUNDER.

WE saw or heard nothing for a week or more of Mr. Carmel. It was possible that he would never return. I was in low spirits. Laura Grey had been shut up by a cold, and on the day of which I am now speaking she had not yet been out. I therefore took my walk alone towards Penruthyn Priory, and, as dejected people not unfrequently do, I was well enough disposed to indulge and even to nurse my melancholy.

A thunder-storm had been for hours moving upward from the south-east, among the grand ranges of distant mountain that lie, tier beyond tier, at the other side of the estuary, and now it rested in a wide and lurid canopy of cloud upon the summits of the hills and headlands that overlook the water.

It was evening, later than my usual return to tea. I knew that Laura Grey minded half an hour here or there as little as I did, and a thunder-storm seen and heard from the neighbourhood of Malory is one of the grandest spectacles in its way on earth. Attracted by the mighty hills on the other side, these awful elemental battles seldom visit our comparatively level shore, and we see the lightning no nearer than about half-way across the water. Vivid against blackening sky and purple mountain the lightning flies and shivers. From broad hill-side, through rocky gorges, reflected and returned from precipice to precipice, through the hollow windings of the mountains, the thunder rolls and rattles, dies away, explodes again, and at length subsides in the strangest and grandest

of all sounds, spreading through all that mountainous region for minutes after, like the roar and tremble of an enormous seething caldron.

Suppose these aerial sounds reverberating from cliff to cliff, from peak to peak, and crag to crag, from one hill-side to another, like the cannon in the battles of Milton's angels; suppose the light of the setting sun through a chink in the black curtain of cloud behind me, touching with misty fire the graves and headstones in the pretty churchyard, where, on the stone bench under the eastern window, I have taken my seat, near the grave of my darling sister; and suppose an uneasy tumult, not a breeze, in the air, sometimes still, and sometimes in moaning gusts tossing sullenly the boughs of the old trees that darken the churchyard.

For the first time since her death I had now visited this spot without tears. My thoughts of death had ceased to be pathetic, and were, at this moment, simply terrible. "My heart was disquieted within me, and the fear of death had fallen upon me." I sat with my hands clasped together, and my eyes fixed on the thunderous horizon before me, and the grave of my darling under my eyes, and she, in her coffin, but a few feet beneath. The grave, God's prison, as old Rebecca Torkill used to say, and then the judgment! This new sense of horror and despair was, I dare say, but an unconscious sympathy with the vengeful and melancholy aspect of nature.

I heard a step near me, and turned.

It was Mr. Carmel who approached. He was looking more than usually pale, I thought, and ill. I was surprised, and a little confused. I cannot recall our greeting. I said, after that was over, something, I believe, about the thunder-storm.

"And yet," he answered, "you under-

stand these awful phenomena—their causes. You remember our little talk about electricity—here it is! We know all that is but the restoration of an equilibrium. Think what it will be when God restores the moral balance, and settles the equities of eternity! There are moods, times, and situations in which we contemplate justly our tremendous Creator. Fear him who, after he has killed the body, has power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear him. Here all suffering is transitory. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. This life is the season of time, and of mercy; but once in hell, mercy is no more, and eternity opens, and endures, and has no end."

Here he ceased for a time to speak, and looked across the estuary, listening, as it seemed, to the roll and tremble of the thunder.

After a little while, he said: "That you are to die is most certain; nothing more uncertain than the time and manner; by a slow or a sudden death; in a state of grace or of sin. Therefore, we are warned to be ready at all hours. Better twenty years too soon than one moment late; for to perish once is to be lost for ever. Your death depends upon your life. Such as your life is, such will be your death. How can we dare to live in a state that we dare not die in?"

I sat gazing at this young priest, who, sentence after sentence, was striking the very key-note of the awful thought that seemed to peal and glare in the storm. He stood with his head uncovered, his great earnest eyes sometimes raised, sometimes fixed on me, and the uncertain gusts at fitful intervals tossed his hair this way and that. The light of the sinking sun touched his thin hand, and his head, and glimmered on the long grass; the graves lay around us; and the voice of God himself seemed to speak in the air.

Mr. Carmel drew nearer, and in the same earnest vein talked on. There was no particle of what is termed the controversial in what he had said. He had not spoken a word that I could not subscribe. He had quoted, also, from our version of the Bible; but he presented the terrors of revelation with a prominence more tremendous than I was accustomed to, and the tone of his discourse was dismaying.

I will not attempt to recollect and to give you in detail the conversation that followed. He presented, with a savage homeliness of illustration, with the same

simplicity and increasing force, the same awful view of Christianity. Beyond the naked strength of the facts, and the terrible brevity with which he stated them in their different aspects, I don't know that there was any special eloquence in his discourse, but, in the language of scripture, his words made "both my ears tingle."

He did not attempt to combat my Protestant tenets directly; that might have alarmed me; he had too much tact for that. Anything he said with that tendency was in the way simply of a disclosure of the teaching and practice of his own Church.

"In the little volume of legends you were so good as to say you would like to look into," he said, "you will find the prayer of Saint Louis de Gonzaga; you will also find an anonymous prayer, very pathetic and beautiful. I have drawn a line in red ink down the margin at its side, so it is easily found. These will show you the spirit in which the faithful approach the blessed Virgin. They may interest you. They will, I am sure, interest your sympathies for those who have suffered like you, and have found peace and hope in these very prayers."

He then spoke very touchingly of my darling sister, and my tears at last began to flow.

It was the strangest half-hour I had ever passed. Religion during that time had appeared in a gigantic and terrible aspect. My grief for my sister was now tinged with terror. Do not we from our Lutheran pulpits too lightly appeal to that potent emotion—fear?

For awhile this tall thin priest in black, whose pale face and earnest eyes seemed to gleam on me with an intense and almost painful enthusiasm, looked like a spirit in the deepening twilight; the thunder rattled and rolled on among the echoing mountains, the gleam of the lightning grew colder and wilder as the darkness increased, and the winds rushed mournfully, and tossed the churchyard grass, and bowed the heads of the great trees about us; and as I walked home, with my head full of awful thoughts, and my heart agitated, I felt as if I had been talking with a messenger from that other world.

CHAPTER IX. AWAKENED.

We do these proselytising priests great wrong when we fancy them cold-blooded practisers upon our credulity, who seek, for merely selfish ends, to entangle us by sophistries, and inveigle us into those

mental and moral catacombs from which there is no escape. We underrate their danger when we deny their sincerity. Mr. Carmel sought to save my soul; nobler or purer motive, I am sure, never animated man. If he acted with caution, and even by stratagem, he believed it was in the direct service of Heaven, and for my eternal weal. I know him better, his strength and his weakness, now—his asceticism, his resolution, his tenderness. That young priest—long dead—stands before me, in the white robe of his purity, king-like. I see him, as I saw him last, his thin, handsome features, the light of patience on his face, the pale smile of suffering and of victory. His tumults and his sorrows are over. Cold and quiet he lies now. My thanks can never reach him; my unavailing blessings and gratitude follow my true and long-lost friend, and tears wrung from a yearning heart.

Laura Grey seemed to have lost her suspicions of this ecclesiastic. We had more of his society than before. Our readings went on, and sometimes he joined us in our walks. I used to see him from an upper window every morning early, busy with spade and trowel, in the tiny flower-garden which belonged to the steward's house. He used to work there for an hour punctually, from before seven to nearly eight. Then he vanished for many hours, and was not seen till nearly evening, and we had, perhaps, our Gerusalemme Liberata, or he would walk with us for a mile or more, and talk in his gentle but cold way, pleasantly, on any topic we happened to start. We three grew to be great friends. I liked to see him when he, and, I may add, Laura Grey also, little thought I was looking at his simple garden work under the shadow of the grey wall from which the old cherry and rose-trees drooped, in picturesque confusion, under overhanging masses of ivy.

He and I talked as opportunity occurred more and more freely upon religion. But these were like lovers' confidences, and, by a sort of tacit consent, never before Laura Grey. Not that I wished to deceive her; but I knew very well what she would think and say of my imprudence. It would have embarrassed me to tell her; but her remonstrances would not have prevailed; I would not have desisted; we should have quarrelled; and yet I was often on the point of telling her, for any reserve with her pained me.

In this quiet life we had glided from summer into autumn, and suddenly, as be-

fore, Mr. Carmel vanished, leaving just such a vague little note as before.

I was more wounded, and a great deal more sorry this time. The solitude I had once loved so well was irksome without him. I could not confess to Laura, scarcely to myself, how much I missed him.

About a week after his disappearance, we had planned to drink tea in the house-keeper's room. I had been sitting at the window in the gable that commanded the view of the steward's garden, which had so often shown me my hermit at his morning's work. The roses were already shedding their honours on the mould, and the scar of autumn was mellowing the leaves of the old fruit-trees. The shadow of the ancient stone house fell across the garden, for by this time the sun was low in the west, and I knew that the next morning would come and go, and the next, and bring no sign of his return, and so on, and on, perhaps for ever.

Never was little garden so sad and silent! The fallen leaves lay undisturbed, and the weeds were already peeping here and there among the flowers.

"Is it part of your religion?" I murmured bitterly to myself, as, with folded hands, I stood a little way back, looking down through the open window, "to leave willing listeners thus half-instructed? Business! What is the business of a good priest? I should have thought the care and culture of human souls was, at least, part of a priest's business. I have no one to answer a question now—no one to talk to. I am, I suppose, forgotten."

I dare say there was some affectation in this. But my dejection was far from affected, and, hiding my sorrowful and bitter mood, I left the window and came down the back stairs to our place of meeting. Rebecca Torkill and Laura Grey were in high chat. Tea being just made, and everything looking so delightfully comfortable, I should have been, at another time, in high spirits.

"Ethel, what do you think? Rebecca has been just telling me that the mystery about Mr. Carmel is quite cleared up. Mr. Prichard, the grocer, in Cardyllion, was visiting his cousin, who has a farm near Plasnewydd, and who should he see there but our missing friar, in a carriage driving with Mrs. Tredwynyd, of Plasnewydd. She is a beautiful woman still, and one of the richest widows in Wales, Rebecca says; and he has been living there ever since he left this; and his last visit, when we thought

he was making a religious sojourn in a monastery, was to the same house and lady ! What do you think of that ? But it is not near ended yet. Tell the rest of the story, Mrs. Torkill, to Miss Ethel—please do."

" Well, miss, there's nothin' very particular, only they say all round Plaswyd that she was in love with him, and that he's goin' to turn Protestant, and it's all settled they're to be married. Every one is singin' to the same tune all round Plaswyd, and what every one says must be true, as I've often heard say."

I laughed, and asked whether our tea-cake was ready, and looked out of the window. The boughs of the old fruit-trees in the steward's garden hung so near it that the ends of the sprays would tap the glass, if the wind blew. As I leaned against the shutter, drumming a little tune on the window, and looking as careless as any girl could, I felt cold and faint, and my heart was bursting. I don't know what prevented my dropping on the floor in a swoon.

Laura, little dreaming of the effect of this story upon me, was chatting still with Rebecca, and neither perceived that I was moved by the news.

That night I cried for hours in my bed, after Laura Grey was fast asleep. It never occurred to me to canvass the probability of the story. We are so prone to believe what we either greatly desire or greatly fear. The violence of my own emotions startled me. My eyes were opened at last to a part of my danger.

As I whispered, through convulsive sobs, "He's gone, he's gone—I have lost him—he'll never be here any more ! Oh ! why did you pretend to take an interest in me ? Why did I listen to you ? Why did I like you ?" All this, and as much more girlish lamentation and upbraiding as you please to fancy, dispelled my dream and startled my reason. I had an interval to recover in ; happily for me, this wild fancy had not had time to grow into a more impracticable and dangerous feeling.

I felt like an awakened somnambulist at the brink of a precipice. Had I become attached to Mr. Carmel, my heart must have broken in silence, and my secret have perished with me.

Some weeks passed, and an event occurred, which, more than my girlish pride and resolutions, turned my thoughts into a new channel, and introduced a memorable actor upon the scene of my life.

CHAPTER X. A SIGHT FROM THE WINDOWS.

WE were now in stormy October ; a fierce and melancholy month ! August and September touch the greenwood leaves with gold and russet, and gently loosen the hold of every little stalk on forest bough ; and then, when all is ready, October comes on, in storm, with sounds of trump and rushing charge and fury not to be argued or dallied with, and thoroughly executes the sentence of mortality that was recorded in the first faint yellow of the leaf, in the still sun of declining July.

October is all the more melancholy for the still, golden days that intervene, and show the thinned branches in the sunlight, soft and clear as summer's, and the boughs cast their skeleton shadows across brown drifts of leaves.

On the evening I am going to speak of, there was a wild, threatening sunset, and the boatmen of Cardyllion foretold a coming storm. Their predictions were verified.

The breeze began to sigh and moan through the trees and chimney-stacks of Malory, shortly after sunset, and in another hour, it came on to blow a gale from the north west. From that point the wind sweeps right up the estuary from the open sea ; and after it has blown for a time, and the waves have gathered their strength, the sea bursts grandly upon the rocks, a little in front of Malory.

We were sitting cosily in our accustomed tea-room. The rush and strain of the wind on the windows became momentarily more vehement, till the storm reached its highest and most tremendous pitch.

" Don't you think," said Laura, after an awful gust, " that the windows may burst in ? The wind is frightful. Hadn't we better get to the back of the house ?"

" Not the least danger," I answered ; " these windows have small panes, and immensely strong sashes, and they have stood so many gales, that we may trust them for this."

" There, again !" she exclaimed. " How awful !"

" No danger to us, though. These walls are thick, and as firm as rock ; not like your flimsy brick houses, and the chimneys are as strong as towers. You must come up with me to the window in the tawny-room ; there is an open space in the trees opposite, and we can see pretty well. It is worth looking at ; you never saw the sea here in a storm."

With very little persuasion, I induced her to run up-stairs with me. Along the

corridor, we reached the chamber in question, and placing our candle near the door, and running together to the window, we saw the grand spectacle we had come to witness.

Over sea and land, rock and wood, a dazzling moon was shining. Tattered bits of cloud, the "scud" I believe they call it, were whirling over us, more swiftly than the flight of a bird, as far as your eye could discern: till the sea was lost in the grey mist of the horizon it was streaked and ridged with white. Nearer to the stooping trees, that bowed and quivered in the sustained blast, and the little churchyard dormitory that nothing could disturb, the black peaked rock rose above the turmoil, and a dark causeway of the same jagged stone, sometimes defined enough, sometimes submerged, connected it almost with the mainland. A few hundred yards beyond it, I knew, stretched the awful reef on which the *Intrinsic*, years before I could remember, had been wrecked. Beyond that again, we could see the waves leaping into sheets of foam, that seemed to fall as slowly and softly as clouds of snow. Nearer, on the dark rock, the waves flew up high into the air, like cannon-smoke.

Within these rocks that make an awful breakwater, full of mortal peril to ships driving before the storm, the estuary, near the shores of Malory, was comparatively quiet.

At the window, looking on this wild scene, we stood, side by side, in the fascination which the sea in its tumultuous mood never fails to exercise. Thus, not once turning our eyes from the never-flagging variety of the spectacle, we gazed for a full half-hour, when, suddenly, there appeared—was it the hull of a vessel shorn of its masts? No, it was a steamer, a large one, with low chimneys. It seemed to be about a mile and a half away, but was driving on very rapidly. Sometimes the hull was quite lost to sight, and then again rose black and sharp on the crest of the sea.

We held our breaths. Perhaps the vessel was trying to make the shelter of the pier of Cardyllion; perhaps she was simply driving before the wind.

To me there seemed something uncertain and staggering in the progress of the ship. Before her lay the ominous reef, on which many a good ship and brave life had perished. There was quite room enough, I knew, with good steering, between the head of the reef and the sandbank at the other side, to make the pier of Cardyllion,

But was there any one on board who knew the intricate navigation of our dangerous estuary? Could any steering in such a tempest avail? And, above all, had the ship been crippled? In any case, I knew enough to be well aware that she was in danger.

Reader, if you have never witnessed such a spectacle, you cannot conceive the hysterical excitement of that suspense. All those on board are, for the time, your near friends; your heart is among them; their terrors are yours. A ship driving with just the hand and eye of one man for its only chance, under Heaven, against the fury of sea and wind, and a front of deadly rock, is an unequal battle; the strongest heart sickens as the crisis nears, and the moments pass in an unconscious agony of prayer.

Rebecca Torkill joined us at this moment.

"Oh, Rebecca!" I said; "there is a ship coming up the estuary; do you think they can escape?"

"The telescope should be on the shelf at the back-stair head," she answered, as soon as she had taken a long look at the steamer. "Lord ha' mercy on them, poor souls! that's the very way the *Intrinsic* drove up before the wind the night she was lost; and I think this will be the worse night of the two."

Mrs. Torkill returned with the long sea telescope, in its worn casing of canvas.

I took the first "look out." After wandering, hither and thither, over a raging sea, and sometimes catching the tossing head of some tree in the foreground, the glass lighted, at length, upon the vessel. It was a large steamer, pitching and yawing frightfully. Even to my inexperienced eye, it appeared nearly unmanageable. I handed the glass to Laura. I felt faint.

Some of the Cardyllion boatmen came running along the road that passes in front of Malory. I saw that two or three of them had already arrived on the rising ground beside the churchyard, and were watching events from that wind-swept point. I knew all the Cardyllion boatmen, for we often employed them; and I said:

"I can't stay here; I must hear what the boatmen say. Come, Laura, come with me."

Laura was willing enough.

"Nonsense! Miss Ethel," exclaimed the housekeeper. "Why, dear Miss Grey, you could not keep hat or bonnet on in a wind like that. You could not keep your feet in it!"

Remonstrance, however, was in vain. I tied a handkerchief tight over my head and under my chin. Laura did the same. And out we both sallied, notwithstanding Rebecca Torkill's protest and entreaty. We had to go by the back door; it would have been impossible to close the hall-door against such a gale.

Now we were out in the bright moonlight under the partial shelter of the trees, which bent and swayed with the roar of a cataract over our heads. Near us was the hillock we tried to gain; it was next to impossible to reach it against the storm. Often we were brought to a standstill, and often forced backward, notwithstanding all our efforts.

At length, in spite of all, we stood on the little platform, from which the view of the rocks and sea beyond was clear.

Williams, the boatman, was close to me at my right hand, holding his low-crowned hat down on his head with his broad hard hand. Laura was at my other side. Our dresses were slapping and rattling in the storm like the cracking of a thousand whips; and such a roaring was in my ears, although my handkerchief was tied close over them, that I could scarcely hear anything else.

WONDERS.

A BOOKCASE, the great delight of my boyhood, was enriched with sundry volumes of the Wonderful Magazine, a work the more to be ever-regretted, because its revival and continuation would be difficult, if not impossible, now. Not but that we have wonders too, but they are wonders of a different character. We have true wonders; humbug wonders; scientific wonders; wonders of organic and inorganic matter, despised by an amiable First Commissioner of Works; speculative, moral, and social wonders, undreamt of when that magazine appeared. The marvellous periodical, true to its mission, gave the good, old, last-century wonders, besides whatever startling facts or things could be raked up to the surface from all past time.

This compilation of all that was extraordinary gave, of course, the seven wonders of the world in minute detail, including an accurate view of the Colossus of Rhodes. There was Fingall's Cave, and also the Derbyshire Peak Cavern; the latter under a coarser name, connecting it with satanic personality. There was the Cock Lane

Ghost; Mrs. Tabitha Tibbets's safe delivery of a large little family of rabbits; Old Parr and the Countess of Desmond, with portraits—of the latter frisky centenarian after her climbing the apple-tree and breaking her leg by the fall therefrom. For the magazine, you should know, was an "illustrated," with coarse engravings not devoid of vigour. There was Elwes the miser, Mrs. Brownrigg the apprentice-killer, and numerous other personages who distinguished themselves by departing widely from the common run of man and womankind.

The serial stories—no invention of the current century—were Gulliver's Travels; the Adventures of Moll Flanders, in spite of Defoe's genius much too realistic for modern ears polite; the life and death of Eugene Aram, a history which Lord Lytton has subjected to the Voltairean rule of taking what he wants where he happens to find it. Nor, in truth, is that novel the sole product of contemporary literature whose germ I remember to have noted in the Wonderful Magazine.

I cannot, if I would, turn it to the same account, for, alas, poor books! they are lost to me for ever, unless I could find them in the British Museum; and then they would be, not mine, but the nation's. At the distribution of the paternal chattels, the Wonderful Magazine fell not to me. Its much-loved volumes are now dispersed, unfortunately nobody can tell me where, pining, separately, on distant book-stalls, perhaps at the antipodes, or torn up into curl-papers for some dirty-faced child. Who will restore my Wonderful Magazines?

Didn't Sancho say, "It's no use crying over spilt milk"? The Wonderful being gone and out of print, and most assuredly past reprinting, all one can do is to wipe one's eyes. They are hereby wiped, and strongly recommended to look out for another series of wonders. In short, having resolved to make a New Wonderful Magazine for my own perusal, I have already commenced collecting the materials. No matter what they are, so they be but wonderful.

My first contribution to my own miscellany is a wonderfully affectionate fish. It comes from Jacques Arago's *Voyage Round the World*,* and, pray you mind, is the account of an eye-witness. Be it recorded, by the way, that the distinguished traveller, after a fit of sea-sickness that lasted four

* *Voyage Autour du Monde*, par M. Jacques Arago. Edition Illustrée. Bruxelles, 1840, p. 17.

years, became blind on his return to France, and consoled his hours of darkness by recalling what he had seen.

"A shark!" shouted one of the sailors, all of a sudden. "A shark at the stern!" And, in fact, there the monster was, watching with his glassy eye for anything that might fall overboard. It was a welcome episode to break the dead calm, at which the crew were beginning to swear with their usual flowers of rhetoric.

In no time, an iron hook of the largest size is stuck into an enormous bit of bacon, and lowered into the sea by tackle of sufficient strength. Before the bait has been two minutes in the water, the little pilot-fish, the shark's provider, has frisked and darted to and fro, to inform his master what an easy prey is there. The shark, without waiting to be invited twice, turns on his back, and bites so well that the point of the hook comes out, red with blood, through his upper jaw. His struggles are unavailing; he is fairly caught. In vain does he plunge and tug fiercely at the rope. His captors are too many for him; before long he is writhing on deck. But it is well to approach him cautiously; an oar stuck into his mouth is crunched like a straw. And the affectionate pilot-fish has not abandoned him. Faithful to the lord of his choice, he still clings to him when hauled out of the water, and refuses to quit him, even in death.

The said pilot-fish, a member of the mackerel family, is a pretty little creature about a foot long. The confiding familiarity which subsists, from whatever motive, between itself and the adult shark, is proved by evidence beyond a doubt. For want of a shark to attach itself to, it will accompany ships during their course at sea, and that for weeks and months together. It is met with occasionally in Mount's Bay, Cornwall, and so gets included in the list of British fishes; but, Mr. Couch informs us, its presence can always be traced to the arrival of some foreign vessel, around which it constantly continues.

Nor is the shark's tenacity of life less extraordinary than its power of attracting the pilot-fish, although one is a physical, while the other may be called a moral quality. Two hours after the operation of cutting it up, the heart of Arago's shark still beat so violently as to force open the hand that tried to grasp and hold it; while the mutilated remains of the carcass, plunged in water to keep them fresh for eating, showed signs of life the next day.

Still more wonderful are the performances of another little fish. If true, the same Jacques Arago may well tell us that the sea around Guham (one of the Marianne, or Ladron Islands), is even more productive than the land. The inhabitants make war on the finny tribes with the help of an auxiliary taken from themselves, whose name our voyager unfortunately forgot. It is a small fish which is kept in a reservoir, and tended with the greatest care. When his education is supposed to be complete, the fisherman takes him out to sea, and turns him loose. Little fishey then mingles with a shoal of his brethren, the bigger the better, so long as they do not eat him. At a signal given by striking certain knocks on the boat, the intelligent pupil forthwith returns, bringing with him his new-made acquaintances into the net which is ready to receive them.

The nameless fish thus shows a capacity—and it is Arago (p. 251), not I, who is responsible for the statement—equal to that of the Norfolk decoy-ducks, which really do entice wild fowl to their destruction. The call-ducks of the Continent, canards de rappel, are not decoy-ducks at all. They merely, by continuous quacking, arrest the attention of passing wild-fowl, and induce them to come within range of the gunner's shot. The most clamorous are therefore the best, whatever their plumage. Colonel Hawker tells us that the call-ducks employed in France are partly of the wild breed; "and three French ducks, like three Frenchmen, will make about as much noise as a dozen English."

Is a fish, playing the part of a decoy-duck, more wonderful than a bird undertaking the duties of a shepherd's dog? A pair of the birds in question, the trumpeter agami, *Psophia crepitans*, were lately brought to Paris, from Pernambuco, to replace their predecessors in the Jardin des Plantes, who had died out, or disappeared during the siege. Their presence excited, for a day or two, more curiosity than the trials of Communist prisoners for life or death. We are not informed whether an opportunity was given them of exercising their undoubted talents, which are vouch'd for by M. Isidore Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire,* and have been signalled for some time past. "This bird," say Daubenton and

* *Acclimatation et Domestication des Animaux Utiles*, p. 57. Paris, 1861.

Bernardin de Saint Pierre, "has the instincts and the fidelity of a dog. It will keep a troop of poultry, and even a flock of sheep, by whom it makes itself obeyed, although it is not bigger than a hen" (but considerably taller). The wood-cut represents a stuck-up, long-legged creature, having a very good opinion of itself. M. Saint-Hilaire has seen it make itself as useful in the poultry-yard as it is said to be in the open fields. It maintains order there, protecting the feeble from the strong, and distributing to the chickens and the ducklings food of which it refrains from touching a morsel itself. No creature, perhaps, is easier to tame, or more naturally attached to man. But the propagation of this valuable species has never been obtained in the cool climate of Paris. Attempts in the south of France might be more successful. And not only has M. Saint-Hilaire had personal cognisance of these facts both with the common and the white-winged agamis, but he caused them to be witnessed by the persons who attended his lectures, during the visits to the menagerie which concluded every annual course at the museum.

One more word about fishy wonders. "Mute as a fish" must be dropped as obsolete and, what is worse, erroneous. In many parts of the world fishes are known to make peculiar noises, which are described in some cases as being musical. A South American fish called the "armado" (*a Silurus*), is remarkable from a harsh grating noise which it makes when caught by a hook and line, and which can be distinctly heard when the fish is beneath the water. Very little has been ascertained with respect to the means by which such sounds are produced, and even less about their purpose. The drumming of the Umbrinas in the European seas is said to be audible from a depth of twenty fathoms. The fishermen of La Rochelle assert that the males alone make the noise during the spawning time; and that it is possible, by imitating it, to take them without bait. Consequently, Mr. Darwin interprets those sounds as a love-call, thus attributing to the lowest class of the Vertebrata habits prevailing throughout the other vertebrate classes, and which we know to prevail even with insects and spiders.

There are fish (tunneys) which put their heads out of water, and cry like a child; which sing in chorus like a distant organ; which make noises like the creaking of a

wheel, the rolling of a drum, the humming of a top. One fish imitates the lowing of a cow, another the quacking of a duck. I have heard trapped cuttle-fish, when the tide was leaving them, make noises like pigs greedily eating their swill. In the Bay of Pailon, there are fishes called "musicos," from their vocal accomplishments. Their performances remind the hearer of hymns that might be chanted in a submarine church.

Fish, too, can be listeners as well as executants. *Aelian* says that the shads appear to take pleasure in the sounds of musical instruments; but if it happen to thunder when they are ascending rivers, they rapidly return to the sea. But more than that; the shad is fond, not only of music, but of dancing. Is this the remnant or the continuation of an ancient and deeply-rooted belief? According to Aristotle, as soon as the shad has heard the sound of music, and seen people dance, it is irresistibly impelled to imitate them; in doing which, it cuts capers on the surface of the water. Rondelet tested, at Vichy, the truth of Aristotle's assertion. One moonlight night, armed with his violin, he strolled along the banks of the Allier. On reaching a spot where he knew there were fish, he struck up a brilliant waltz. The effect was immediate and magical. The shads stood upright on their tails, and leaped out of the water, keeping time to the music. Not a fish invited to the fête left off dancing as long as the fiddle played.

The supernatural may fairly be taken to comprise the wonderful. I have supernatural marvels to dispose of by wholesale.

In the cemetery of the Père Lachaise, at Paris, there is a granite tomb, severe and simple, striking and original, being an imitation of a Druidical monument, inscribed with the name of Allan Kardec, and raised to his memory by his disciples. This personage (who claimed the privilege of interrogating and conversing with the dead of all ages past as well as with the world of spiritual beings) published a volume, *Le Livre des Esprits*, *The Book of Spirits*, which, in 1863, claimed to have reached its tenth edition, expounding what it called spiritism.

The essential point of spiritism is a belief in the existence of spirits—a belief which most minds will accept—and in the communications of spirits with the visible world; respecting which, cautious intellects

will refrain from coming to any rash conclusion. The spirit-doctrine is founded on the assumption that the material world can hold intercourse at will with spirits or beings belonging to the invisible world. Adepts in spiritism rejoice in the title of spiritists.

The Book of Spirits professes to contain nothing which is not the expression of the spirits' thoughts, and which has not undergone their supervision. The order and distribution of the contents, with some other editorial details, are all that is due to the favoured person who received the mission to give them to the world. The superior spirits (with the aid of divers mediums) deigned—we are seriously told—to teach the peculiar principles of the spirit doctrine. Amongst the numerous spirits who have cooperated in the work, several have lived on earth at sundry epochs, when they preached and practised virtue and wisdom. Others do not belong, by name, to any personage mentioned in history; but their rank is said to be attested by the purity of their doctrine, and their association with well-known venerated spirits.

One of their editorial directions is, "Thou shalt place at the head of the book the vine-branch which we have drawn for thee." A fac-simile of the spirits' drawing is accordingly given. In style it resembles the sketches made by young gentlemen on the whitewashed walls and doors of the establishment where they receive all the comforts of a home (whipping included) from seven to thirteen years of age. "It is the emblem of the work of the Creator. All the material principles which best represent the body and the spirit are found therein united. The branch is the body; the juice is the spirit; the stones are the soul, or the spirit united to matter.

"Allow not thyself to be discouraged by criticism. Thou wilt meet with furious contraditors, especially amongst people interested in maintaining abuses. Thou wilt even find some amongst the spirits; for those who are not completely dematerialised often seek to scatter doubts out of malice or ignorance. But pursue thy way and walk in confidence. The time is at hand when the truth shall burst forth in all directions."

The spirits' charge, of which the above is an extract, is attested by the signatures of Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louis, the Spirit of Truth, Socrates, Plato, Fenelon, Franklin, Swedenbourg, and others; and then, the prologue concluded, the curtain draws up,

and the farce—I beg Allan Kardeec's ghost's pardon—the Book of Spirits begins.

The body of the work is a catechism, strictly after the Pincock pattern, in which Kardeec acts the catechist. But however interesting may be their answers respecting Infinity, Pantheism, the Properties of Matter, and other grave and lofty topics, the general reader will be more curious to know what the spirits tell about themselves. For instance :

Have spirits a determinate, limited, and constant form?

"In your eyes, No; in ours, Yes. They are, if you will, a flame, a light, or an etherised spark."

Is this flame or spark of any colour?

"For you it varies from a dark hue to the brightness of the ruby, according as the spirit is more or less pure."

Do spirits employ any length of time in traversing space?

"Yes, but they travel as quick as thought."

Has the spirit who betakes himself from one spot to another any consciousness of the space traversed; or is he suddenly transported to the locality whither he wishes to go?

"Both one and the other. The spirit can take cognisance of the distance travelled; but that distance can also be completely effaced. It depends upon his will, and also on the greater or less purity of his nature."

Do there exist, as has been stated, worlds which serve wandering spirits for stations and resting-places?

"Yes, there are worlds specially allotted to wandering spirits; worlds in which they may temporarily dwell, a sort of bivouacs or camps in which they can take their repose after a too long spell of travel, which is always more or less fatiguing. Conceive flocks of birds of passage alighting upon an island, in order to gain strength to pursue their journey."

Peter Wilkins saw something of the kind long ago, and described it in more entertaining style. But we have here two wonders rolled into one: First, that any one should have the hardihood to print, as serious truths, such a tissue of absurdities; and, secondly, that, in 1863, people have been found to believe in and patronise the author of the said absurdities. What a relief to know that there are real wonders to which we can return after our disgust at those connected with spiritist philosophy!

It is not by doubling a thing that you

always increase its power or its intensity. You may overdo it, as often happens. Two negatives, in the English language, make, not a stronger negative, but a positive. And two transparencies may make an opacity. Not to be obscure myself, it will happen in this wise:

White sunlight, we know, is composed of coloured rays. Now there are transparent substances which will allow some only of those coloured rays to pass through them, while they stop the rest. Look through a piece of red glass, and everything you see through it will appear coloured red, because the glass stops all rays except the red ones, which only strike your eye.

Lay down the red glass, and take a piece of green glass. Look through it, and everything will appear green. But red and green are called complementary colours, because, mingled together, they produce white. Place, then, a piece of transparent green glass upon a piece of transparent red glass, and you will have obscurity more or less complete, according to the intensity with which the glass is tinted. The explanation is obvious. As the red glass refuses all rays except the red ones, and the green glass arrests all rays except the green ones, and as those two colours contain all the elements which constitute white light, darkness is the necessary consequence.

This also shows that the colour of objects is merely a relative, and not an absolutely inherent, quality. It depends entirely on the circumstances in which the light they receive is produced, and on their power of reflecting certain rays and their inability to reflect certain other rays. A body which reflects all the rays of sunlight, is white. The body which reflects only some of them, is red, blue, or yellow, as the case may be.

This is curious enough; but the wonder is that sound presents somewhat similar phenomena; which is taken as a confirmation of the belief that both sound and light are produced by waves or undulations. It is a fact that, by making more noise, you do not necessarily get louder sounds. Two sounds combined may make silence. Not only is the extinction of sound by sound possible, but Doctor Tyndall shows how it may be done, and gives the reasons for that extraordinary result. It is entirely an affair of waves.

In the case of water-waves; when the crests of one set of waves coincide and unite with the crests of another set of waves, higher waves will be the result of

the combination of those two sets of waves. But when the crests of one set of waves coincide or fall in with the hollows or furrows of the other set, the water will be smoothed or levelled; the two sets of waves will wholly or partly destroy each other. This mutual destruction of two sets of waves is called, by the scientific, Interference.

We can conceive the same thing happening with waves of sound. If, in two sets of sonorous waves, the moment of condensation (which corresponds to the crest of a water-wave) in the one coincides with the moment of condensation in the other, the sound produced by such coincidence will be louder than that produced by either set of sound-waves taken singly. But if the condensations of the one set of sound-waves coincide with the rarefactions (answering to the hollows or troughs between water-waves) of the other set of sound-waves, a destruction, total or partial, of both sets of sound-waves is the consequence. That is, little or no sound is audible. The case may be illustrated by two organ-pipes of the same pitch placed near each other on the same wind-chest, and thrown into vibration. They so influence each other that, as the air enters the embouchure of the one, it quits that of the other. At the moment, therefore, the one pipe produces a condensation, the other produces a rarefaction. The sounds of two such pipes mutually destroy each other.

From scientific shift we to commercial wonders. Stepping in to gossip with a friend who keeps a shop, where, besides "novelties," you can buy such everyday utilities as blouses, blankets, and ready-made clothes, known in that neighbourhood as "confections," I found a commercial traveller displaying his sample patterns. The counter was covered with what I took, at first, for jewellery, but which proved, on inspection, to be only buttons. Amazed at their variety, I tried to classify them into families, orders, genera, species; but, giving it up, I asked their proprietor kindly to point out those which he considered the most noteworthy.

"This modest-looking specimen," he said, "which we call an agate button, is perhaps as remarkable as any. It is neat, lustrous, you see, and of a pearly or opaline white throughout its whole surface. Now, sir, we are able to sell twelve times twelve dozen of these white agate buttons, each pierced with four holes, for twenty-

three sous—one franc, fifteen centimes (elevenpence halfpenny English); that is, twelve dozen buttons for less than one penny, with a profit for the manufacturer and the retail shop-keeper. Of course I, the commis voyageur, must also live. Is it not a remarkably cheap button?"

"It is a wonder of cheapness!" I exclaimed. "But—is it possible?"

"You have only to give me an order to be convinced."

From the above specimens, gentle reader, it will be allowed, I think, that my New Wonderful Magazine is in the way of progress.

"CONSULE PLANCO.

AN AUTUMN REVERIE.

BARE grow the trees, the yellowing showers come down,
And passing sunbeams fleck with Autumn's gold
The quivering red leaves of the forest oak;
And as adown the russet lane I stray,
That skirts the boundary of the garden-wall—
My sparse grey locks, slow lifted by the breeze—
Come back in bright kaleidoscope to me
The memories of forty years agone!

White-bloomed magnolias, grouped upon the lawn,
With rose-acacias, and great cedar kings,
Shading, with pennons black, the shaven turf,
Whereon we played at bowls; whilst laughing girls,
White-muslined, with blue ribbons in their wealth
Of rippling golden locks, looked on, and smiled
Upon our prowess. And some twain would steal—
Of pastime weary—to the friendly shade
Of screening laurels, and 'neath June's blue skies,
Whisper the "nothing" sweet, of dawning love.

Ah, me! I know not, whether it be well
To dwell too much upon the hawthorn days,
And memories of youth's sweet blossom-time,
Lest we repine, that winter's snows have chilled
The fire of Spring. And yet, and yet 'tis sweet,
For shrunken limbs, in fancy once again,
To feel the warm glow of their April-tide;
For age-dimmed eyes, to brighten with youth's light,
At these fond pictures—as the war-horse neighs,
When past his work, at stirring trumpet sound.
Ah yes, ah yes! though but in fancy's dream,
To tread again youth's flowery path, is well!

THE CUPBOARD PAPERS.

FIN-BEC EXPLAINS.

FIN-BEC begs to offer the reader a few preliminary words of explanation. These Cupboard Papers are a series of observations and reflections on the art of living, which he has gathered in many places; and which, it will be surely conceded, have the best hope of being considered attentively just now. He who has seen humble and sagacious people living comfortably on materials that would represent something very close upon starvation to an English poor family, and has made the dismal contrast his study, in the hope that he might

presently observe upon it with profit to many thousands in these dear times, now submits his labours to all who have a desire to know the thirst that secures the plenty, and knowing it, to impart it to their neighbours, who hunger through ignorance, rather than through poverty.

I. POOR DEVILS!

"I CANNOT bear the way they live on the Continent. Messes, I call them."

This observation was provoked by the broad stretches of colouring vine that broke upon us as we sped through the rocky way of the railroad, between Bern and Ouchy. The hater of messes had been moved by the grapes to observe that he was of opinion that a Kentish hop-ground was more picturesque than a vineyard. They were a good British couple.

We were travelling through the vineyards of La Côte, along the Jorat range between the Alps and the Jura, and the blue waters of the lake were lapping the roots of the vines, and casting diamond spray upon the ripening fruit. It was a rare day along the banks of the Leman. Not a film between us and the Alps, that stretched in white and purple glory into the deep blue of the sky. Lateen sails swept like snowy wings upon the water, and a gay packet was puffing out of Evian opposite, making for our side. In the vineyards, men and women, swarthy with the fierce heat, were at work, giving a last, loving attention to the grape, over which the leaves were reddening fast. Many a traveller remembers that all the beauty of Lake Leman, where the vines creep to its liquid fringe, almost from Geneva to the Castle of Chillon, bursts upon the sight on issuing from a tunnel.

"Nor I. They wouldn't do for us. I don't say I can't eat them for a week or two when I'm travelling, but live on them, ugh!" The lady shivered expressively, as though some horrible proposition in the way of cannibalism or a train-oil régime had been submitted to her.

The gentleman, being hugely satisfied with the emphatic verdict in his favour, grasped a bunch of alpenstocks he had held, befeater fashion, all the way from the Federal capital, and leaned forward to substantiate his position.

"Mary can't bear them either, nor Aune—I mean our Anne."

"Our Anne would be sure not to like them," the lady observed with quiet firmness; indicating hereby that none of her

race could possibly derogate from the dignity of the family by liking the messes of the Continent, or even tolerating them, while one of the Dothemps, the butchers of Chalkstone, who had served generations of Anne's kindred, lived to cut a mutton-chop, or trim the Sunday leg of mutton.

"You deal with Cheathem now, don't you?"

"The idea!" the lady exclaimed. "Really, Reginald, you ought to know that nothing would ever induce us, nothing—after over forty years! Why the Dothemps must have had thousands out of our family. But you know that as well as I do."

"Of course," Reginald said apologetically, glancing round the carriage to see whether his fellow-passengers were fully impressed with the dignity of a family that had dealt with the same butcher for over forty years.

"You like omelettes, though?" Reginald inquired, in the manner of a man who, in the generosity of his heart, was trying to insinuate an extenuating circumstance in mitigation of sentence upon an unfortunate culprit. "Yes, you like omelettes, of course."

The lady was not to be cajoled. She was a person of firm convictions, which had been instilled into her, just as they had been instilled into her mother and grandmother before her. They were as much part of her as her back hair—possibly, more so. They were part of the eminent gentility of Chalkstone, and no more to be rooted out of a member of one of the genteel families of that eye of the universe, than the corner-stone of the parish church was to be dislodged by a toothpick.

"Omelettes! I don't think there can be any very strong objection to them." The pale-blue grave eyes of the speaker wandered quietly over the vineyards, the lake, and the mountains, while she gave the subject her deepest consideration. "But John always says he doesn't see 'the pull' (as he calls it) they have over English fried eggs, after all. Omlette, too, is very difficult to digest."

"There you are right." Reginald caught at the objection, and, while he described an imaginary pattern upon the carpet with the point of an alpenstock, continued: "John sees straight through things. Still, they can do an omelette in a way that we can't touch."

"Perhaps it's as well we can't, for the waste of butter is positively wicked. Our next station is Lausanne, I think?"

Reginald sought his guide-book, and

compared it with the name of the little vine and flower-covered station at which we were drawing up. Satisfied with the correctness of his book, the punctuality of the train, and of the exact number of miles yet to be traversed, he turned his back on lake, mountains, and vineyards, and searched his mind for another diverting topic, appearing to have an idea that he would find it in the empty lamp-socket in the roof of the carriage.

"You don't see much good fruit on the Continent," was the bright result of his exploration. "Indeed, I call their fruit flavourless. And Boltt is quite of my opinion."

"John is a judge," said the lady, naturally, the gentlemen being, as it subsequently appeared, her husband. "He rather likes their melons."

"Bless me!" responded Reginald; "he never told me that. But, of course, you know. As to melons, they can't help their being fine; they grow in the fields like swedes, or mangold. You see them lying in heaps upon the pavements. I bought one for two sous at Lyons, and took it up to my room at the hotel, and we ate it all to ourselves."

"You greedy creatures!" was the playful rebuke to the beaming Reginald, who was quite of the opinion that he had said something uncommonly witty, and presented himself to the company in the light of a supremely knowing one.

"With a little brandy from my flask, and part of a roll which Anne—my Anne, I mean—had saved from the breakfast, we made quite a cosy lunch, for two sous—a penny!"

"I am afraid not a very wholesome one. At what time do you lunch now? Since we've moved into our new house (you know John has bought it outright?), and we are nearer John's office, we lunch every day at half-past twelve, as the clock strikes."

Reginald was intensely interested, and, by a series of questions, elicited from the lady the further information that John still liked Cheshire cheese as much as ever, and was very cross one day when North Wilshire was put upon the table; that it was very difficult to get exactly the black crust John liked from the baker; that cheese remained at about the same price at Chalkstone; and that John's eldest boy—being a lad of extraordinary discernment—was as fond of Cheshire as his father, which made, altogether, a very diverting

and sprightly narrative for a company of strangers, who had travelled many hundred miles to gaze upon Lake Leman, and were now gliding along its shores, on the loveliest day of a brilliant summer.

A Spanish lady and gentleman who were in the carriage with us drew between them a trim square basket, daintily tied with black riband. The gentleman untied the basket, and then left the lady to operate.

The señora unfolded a white napkin, that sent a cool perfume as of sweet herbs through the carriage, and spread it upon her knees; then a second, which she spread upon the knees of the gentleman. Then some silver knives were unfolded. Then two bright goblets appeared. Intense excitement on the part of Reginald, who answered every movement of the señora by an exchange of glances with his relative. Then a delicious bunch of grapes; two or three kinds of breads—the croissant, the brioche, the pain-grau, &c.—a cake or two of Coloniale chocolate (*the chocolate, let me tell the fastidious reader*), and a little Bordeaux.

Reginald shrugged his shoulders, raised his eyebrows in pity, and muttered, "Dear me! dear me!"

That was a luncheon. What possible good could it do the benighted couple who were about to consume it? Bread and grapes! Why, they were actually munching chocolate and bread! Reginald's relative pulled her waterproof cloak about her, and drew down the ample folds of her blue veil. She seemed to fear that the ignorance was catching.

"Did you ever see such a lunch as that before?" Reginald presently whispered.

The lady pressed her lips together, and with intense conviction replied, "Never."

"They do make such extraordinary combinations. Just think of this—roast kid served with stewed greengages! I actually had it the other day at Cologne, or Mayence, I forget which. But chocolate and bread for luncheon beats me, I confess. And, look, they seem to be enjoying it. Quite their usual lunch, I've no doubt."

"Yes; but you must remember, Reginald"—the gentle lady's heart was filled with pity—"you must remember; you have been accustomed all your life to the very best English living. It strikes you as very dreadful, of course. But look, the French gentleman in the opposite corner doesn't seem to think it in the least degree strange."

Reginald observed the Frenchman, and recognised him as the passenger who at the buffet had taken a glass of ordinaire and water and a cake, and observed that thus fortified, he should last to the journey's end. "It wouldn't do for us," Reginald reflected. "I wonder what John would say to a cake of chocolate and a roll for his luncheon?"

John's wife put on her most scornful expression, and vowed that she was afraid to think what the consequences would be if she were to put such a luncheon before him, under any circumstances.

"They seem to enjoy it, and are as merry as troutlets," Reginald observed, after having given a few minutes to minute watching. "Actually, they seem to enjoy it."

"It's their ordinary way of living, you may be sure," the compassionate lady of the family that had enjoyed uninterrupted dealings with one butcher for over forty years, observed. "I dare say chocolate is meat to them."

"But think of putting water with that wine. It must be abominable; I find it difficult to manage, pure."

"I never touch it," said the lady.

The train drew up at the Ouchy station, and, while a trim girl offered the passengers who were continuing the journey to Geneva baskets of fruit, John appeared to help his wife out of the carriage.

"Reginald and I have had such fun, John," was her greeting; "seeing some Spanish people at lunch."

"What do you think of those for luncheon-hampers?" Reginald asked, pointing to the baskets of fruit. "Awfully heavy, n'est ce pas?"

"Poor devils!" was Mr. John Boltt's sole but significant rejoinder. "I hope they've got bottled beer at the Beau Rivage, that's all I can say. I could drink one of Mr. Bass's vats dry."

"If they haven't, as you say, Boltt, 'poor devils!'" chimed Reginald.

II. AT TABLE-D'HÔTE.

In these days there are plenty of people who are ready to pronounce on the syllabub, the instant their lip breaks the nearest bubble of the froth. They are judges of all vintages; are familiar with every vinscope from the Pyrenees to Fontainebleau, and would not yield in opinion to the oldest taster of the Halles aux Vins. No joyous wine-dealer by the banks of the Garonne has their familiarity with the many quali-

ties of incomparable Bordeaux. Institutions come as easily to them as eggs. They apply their learned spoon, crack the shell, and approach their infallible nose to the yolk. It is bad or it is good. I and you, diffident souls! have been endeavouring to work by study and experience to a just decision; but they jump over our backs, and beckon to us to follow. They approve or disapprove, after a morning's stroll, the fabric of a thousand years.

A constitution is as open to their instant understanding as a washing-bill. They look upon a range of Alps as familiarly as a market-woman handles a rope of onions. You speak with awe of the terrible vastness of a crevasse; to them it is a convenient place where they usually light their cigar. Mont Blanc is their Gipsy Hill, and statesmen and ambassadors and princes are, to them, just capital fellows to chum with.

There are people, again, who will not be taught. Their mind is made up and bolted at all points. Nothing on earth would induce them to receive the smallest additional parcel of knowledge. They are intellectual all-in-alls in their family, and among their acquaintance; and their familiars pity the benighted wretch who is foolish enough to differ from them. They knew it would rain; they were prepared to hear the down-mail had run into the five P.M. from Birmingham; they had given poor Brown, who died yesterday, exactly the span of life he ran, to half an hour; and barometers and thermometers are superfluities, wherever they take up their quarters. Not that they have ever studied, or travelled much. Unyielding dogmatism is their moral back-bone.

The two gentlemen are of British growth. The latter is, shall we say, a Lancashire man; the former, an unmitigated child of Cockayne, and they are both in the habit of appearing at table-d'hôtes on the tourist lines of the Continent. I came upon them, among other places, at that cross between a railway-station, a booking-office, and an hotel, the Metropole at Geneva.

One man, who knew everything, I recognised at once. It was John Boltt, fortunate possessor of the lady whose family had dealt with the Dothems of Chalkstone for over forty years. The table-d'hôte was just over, and he had settled into a conversation with a tourist opposite, who was quite familiar with the Kaiser Wilhelm, and could drop in on Bismarck, whenever he felt inclined, for half an hour's chat before dinner on the destinies of Europe.

Reginald was an enraptured listener; and Mrs. Boltt, like Pauline Deschappelles, hung upon the honey of the eloquent tongue of her beloved John. Hers was genuine admiration, poor, narrow little soul! but what were the two controversialists-in-chief thinking of each other, while they boasted and laid down the law, talking at the company who still lingered at the tables with their toothpicks? Mr. Boltt pronounced the dinner, in his elegant, gentlemanly way, to be a series of makeshifts; to which the friend of Kaiser Wilhelm and droppin' in on Bismarck replied, with equal taste, that when Boltt had had his experience of the tables of the world, he would be better able to adapt himself to the diets of the nations, the repasts of the races; to the substantial steak of the Teuton, and the light lark of the Latin. Mr. Boltt had not the smallest intention of adapting himself to anything. He observed that it was not likely his tastes would change, and hinted that he would take care they should not. Any change from perfection is deterioration. The cockney, who was, let me note, a traveller and an observing man, curled his lip, and glanced round, while he replied that argument was thrown away upon a disputant who avowed that he was not open to reason. He maintained that the dinner was—well, not a good one, judged by a London or Paris club standard, but a wonderful advance on any general dinner ever served in hotel or restaurant in the British metropolis.

"That I deny," was Mr. Boltt's rejoinder.

"That is, you refuse assent to my assertion. I don't know that your refusal annihilates it. I am not sure that it weakens the authority of it."

"I say that a cut from the joint, a bit of fish, and a tart, is a better dinner than all this gastronomic tomfoolery which lasts nearly two hours, and leaves a man of healthy appetite almost as hungry as when he began."

Mrs. Boltt and Reginald exchanged glances of admiration.●

"The whole of it," Reginald timidly interposed, "doesn't come up to a good English joint."

"It is not so wholesome at any rate," Mrs. Boltt simpered, half afraid of the sound of her voice, in the presence of the oracle John.

Mr. Baker (I saw his name afterwards — Bloomsbury Baker — sign-board size, upon his portmanteau in the hall) smiled

and softened his voice, a lady having entered the lists. "As for the wholesomeness, the highest authorities are in favour of less eating, that is, less substantial and a greater variety, than in England. For instance, you can't get such a salad"—it was Romaine, and Baker was right—"as we had just now, in all London."

"I'll mix a salad—with—with anybody in the world; I don't care who he is," said Boltt.

"To your liking, possibly," Mr. Baker replied. "But does that dispose of my question? The salad you would make the Spaniard and the Frenchman would hold in abhorrence. Not a single Genevieve, I take it, would put his lips to it."

"That's because they don't know what a good salad is, and we do."

Both Mrs. Boltt and Reginald took this to be a home thrust on the part of their oracle, and laughed outright.

"You have a good audience," Baker presently continued, quite unabashed, glancing with a quiet eye through his last glass of Burgundy; "but I hold to my opinion, and your remark confirms it very strongly in my mind. Here, or in Paris—nay, go almost where you will on the Continent—and you will find a good salad all the year round, for something like twopence, because, in the first place the French, the Swiss, the Germans, the Italians, and the Spaniards, have a score of wholesome, nay medicinally valuable, plants or growths, of which they make use in their soups or salads, and which we throw away, or leave to rot in the fields."

"Sorrel, you mean, I suppose," was Mr. Boltt's contemptuous observation, which was supported by a wry grimace, dutifully and lovingly drawn by his wife.

"Among other things, yes; and a very wholesome plant." Mr. Baker took no notice of the lady's shudder. "I was in the market this morning, on the Place de la Fusterie, having a talk with the country people, and looking after my morning peach, which I eat regularly as I watch the rushing of the Rhône under the bridge, when one of the women was good enough to point out to me the many varieties of her stall, down to what you would call her basket of toadstools. These, you know, our learned men have taught us, approach, like salmon, in nutritive qualities, to our English beefsteak. You are aware that they have inspectors of fungi in Rome?"

"Inspectors of fiddle-sticks!" was Mr. Boltt's superb rejoinder. "I suppose our

toadstools are part of the precious food we waste."

"Undoubtedly. Then again, we take no trouble about growing mushrooms. Why, under Paris, there are miles of mushroom-beds."

"In the catacombs, I suppose," quoth the wit Boltt, while Reginald rubbed his hands in his delight at the victory of his oracle.

"Boltt's a trifle too strong for him," he whispered to Mrs. Boltt.

"I have met the inspectors. I have eaten twenty varieties of fungi—toadstools as you are pleased to call them—and I was very sorry indeed to see that there were none for dinner to-day, for there were large quantities in the market this morning."

"I think I should have been obliged to leave the table," Mrs. Boltt observed.

"Ladies," Mr. Baker gallantly responded, "are permitted to have prejudices; but we men, it appears to me, are bound to examine for ourselves. It is a good many years ago now since Doctor Barham dedicated his book on Esculent Funguses to the Bishop of Norwich, because its chief object was to furnish the labouring classes with wholesome nourishment and profitable occupation, and his lordship was distinguished from all others, as the doctor said, by recognising the claims and furthering the interests of the poor."

"A queer way of feeding the poor!" Mr. Boltt said, a little more quietly than usual. Was Mr. Baker getting too strong for him?

"And yet," said Mr. Baker, "it is the clergy who have been foremost in what I presume you would call the toadstool movement. Perhaps you remember a very popular book that came out a few years ago called something like Contributions to Natural History, mainly in relation to the Food of the People."

"Never heard of it," was Mr. Boltt's answer, given as though he were for ever establishing the mediocrity and poorness of the volume.

"We have some thirty esculent fungi which our poor fellows who go home every night to dry bread or a mess of porridge, kick with their hobnails."

"They may be poorly off and underfed, sir"—here Reginald took courage to interpose—"but you'll never get them to feed on fungus."

"At least let us hope not," Mrs. Boltt said in support.

"A charming dinner—toadstools for

meat, and sorrel for vegetables!" Mr. Boltt threw in, setting the little audience in a roar.

" You couldn't have anything much better in this weather," the calm philosopher from Cockayne went on, " than a dish of the bright yellow fungi I saw a woman selling in garlands this morning at the corner of the Rue des Allemands. She was a perfect picture, and I wish some English artist—say Mr. Frith—would paint the fungus-seller for the next Royal Academy. She was hooded in the charming white cap, with a red kerchief and short blue skirt; and slung upon both arms were threaded fungi of a rich yellow brown, which she sold readily, I can tell you; for the people here know something more about eating than chops and steaks, and potatoes and cabbages."

" I wish them joy of their knowledge," was Mr. Boltt's benevolent remark.

" You have good reason to do so, sir. By their knowledge, they live handsomely on what our thriftless labourers would call a starvation wage. Don't we see in the papers every day that the ploughmen of this county and of that, can get only a bit of bacon by way of meat; that their children grow up, underfed; that the whole race is deteriorating! At the same time we know that in Kent, for instance, flourishes the very finest and most nutritious of the esculent fungi, which would give blood, and bone, and muscle to the cowherd and his brats, and is destroyed and thrown into the road by the ignorant farmers. Teach the farmers—they are to blame; their servants have never had any opportunity of knowing any better."

" How would you have them eat the delicacy? The more it was disguised, the better I should like it, for my own part." It need hardly be added that this was Mr. Boltt's sally.

Mr. Baker was a man not to be moved from his point or purpose; and he was fully equipped with authorities. " It will mince alone, capitally; it will double the nutritive value of a fricassée. A vol-au-vent of it is magnificent. But, as a dish, in its native majesty, with a little bacon, butter, and pepper and salt, it would not disgrace the stew-pan of the proudest cordon-bleu. We have a mushroom, too, of which you can make delicious fritters!"

" Beignets de toadstool," muttered Reginald in the lady's ear.

" The Romans have a prejudice as strong as yours," Mr. Baker said, turning with

cool severity upon Reginald. " They look upon our common mushroom—the only one we eat, with horror and detestation, and it is flung into the Tiber by the inspectors. The morel, again; we import it, and pay a high price for it; yet when we find it in our own fields we destroy it. But, as I told you, I saw this morning, in the Place de la Fusterie, and in the market-streets round about, a score of varieties of food which are never seen in an English market, which are wholesome and nutritious, and which grow abundantly in our fields—nay, occasionally in our hedges."

" Well, sir," Mr. Boltt said, rising, and determined to break up the sitting, before his fame as an oracle could be further weakened by Mr. Baker (whom he described afterwards in the smoking-room as " a well-informed person from London")—" well, sir, I hope the people of England will never be reduced to a diet of toadstools and weeds. They may be, as you say, underfed—though, on another occasion, I should like to go into that subject with you; they may be ignorant, though I have yet to learn that familiarity with fungi comes under the head of learning; they may be degenerating, though I never saw the foreigner who could stand up to a Northumberland farm-lad. But you will excuse me, if I decline to believe all your doctors, and professors, and inspectors, be they Roman or Parisian, who tell me Englishmen don't know what's good and what's bad, and cannot put upon the table any day, ay, and in any town in the three kingdoms, a more wholesome and satisfactory meal than this table d'hôte, with its menu, and dab, of ice-pudding, and its mouthfuls à la this, that, and the other."

" I should like some tea, John," said Mrs. Boltt, as this triumphant Briton led her out of the salle-à-manger.

" A demi-tasse," said Mr. Baker, to the head-waiter, who had been listening pityingly to the conversation, " and let it be very hot. Yes, and a kirsch; you have it good here. At any rate your Evian eau de cerise has the real cherry flavour."

A DASHING EXPLOIT.

WHEN the Revolution of 1830 set in, Alexandre Dumas, then a very young man, and seeing nothing in life but one series of tableaux, took his share in the more stirring scenes in the capacity of a skirmisher. He tells the whole story in his memoirs,

and his account seems an anticipation of the best portions of Rabagás. But his narrative of his expedition to Soissons to seize some powder will be found one of the most stirring bits of adventure in modern times.

He had heard Lafayette say that if the king were to advance on Paris there would be no powder to meet him with. Alexandre conceived a bold scheme, and proposed to the general to set off for Soissons—a town he well knew—and seize on the magazine there. Lafayette laughed at the idea, but consented to give him a pass to General Gérard, to which Dumas coolly added, "and we recommend his scheme to you." From Gérard he, with some difficulty, obtained a requisition addressed to the authorities of the town for the powder. In this he ingeniously interpolated the words "minister of war"—a rank which no one but himself had conferred on the general. With this official document he returned to Lafayette, and persuaded the old patriot to write him a sort of letter of introduction to the citizens of Soissons, recommending them "Alexandre Dumas, one of our combatants," as a fit and proper person to whom they should hand over the powder. Then our hero—for such he was on this occasion—prepared himself for as spirited and dramatic an adventure as can be found in the books of romance.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon of the 30th of July, 1830. As he was hurrying away, he met a young painter named Bard, who was only nineteen. He asked him to join. The other agreed with alacrity, and Alexandre sending him back for his double-barrelled pistols and his horse, set off himself in a cabriolet for Le Bourget, then the first post on the road to Soissons, and which has since obtained such a disastrous notoriety. Arrived there, he exhibited his Lafayette and Gérard letters to the post-master, and demanded a chaise and horses for his mission. The post-master was friendly, and even empresse, and supplied him at once with what he asked. He went out to buy some pieces of calico—red, white, and blue—which were sewn into a tricolour flag fixed to a broomstick, which latter was tied on to the chaise. With this ensign they started, in hopes of getting to Soissons about midnight. The post-master shook his head, but, as he sagaciously remarked, "so many miracles had been performed during the last three days that it might be possible." As they hurried through the various villages the

flag caused the greatest excitement. His fellow-traveller, delighted, declared that all was going splendidly, "but that they ought to have some sort of cry."

"Shout away, then," said Dumas, "and while you are shouting I'll take some sleep."

The only difficulty was what was to be the cry, and with some hesitation the now well-worn and tattered "Vive la République" was decided on. Accordingly, the young painter, his head out of the window, and his flag waving, roared on. On the high road they met a chaise going to Paris, and a traveller of some fifty years old asked for news.

"The Louvre is taken; the Bourbons fled; Provisional Government established—vive la République!" the excited painter poured out. The gentleman fifty years old scratched his ear, and continued his journey. For the next stage they had an old postilion, who persisted in going at a steady trot, and at every remonstrance, answered doggedly, "Leave it all to me. A man knows his own business best." Dumas at last from the chaise window laid on the backs of the horses with a stick, and made them gallop. In a rage the man pulled up, swore he would unyoke his beasts, and actually proceeded to do so. Dumas fired at him with blank cartridge, and so scared him that he rolled on the ground in terror. Alexandre then put on the huge posting-boots, and, mounting, galloped on to the next post. They soon reached the old familiar Villers-Cotterets—the whole town, as may well be imagined, being thrown into intense excitement by the appearance of the chaise with the tricolour and the excited Alexandre Dumas. Late as it was, every house poured out its inhabitants, who rushed to the post-house. A thousand eager questions were put to him—what did it mean, this flag and the guns? He knew all the townspeople, and told the story of the last few days. It was insisted that he should stay a short time, and have something to eat, and he was carried off to the house of an old friend, where a hasty supper was got ready. A number of old companions, who had been boys when he was in the little town, gathered round, listening eagerly as their old friend declaimed and recounted between every mouthful. As he dashed in for them, which he could do admirably, vivid sketches of these thrilling scenes, the rustics listened with delight and wonder; but when he came to explain the object of his present expedition—"when I announced that I meant

to capture, single-handed, all the powder that was in a military town, containing eight thousand inhabitants, and a garrison of eight hundred men"—they looked at him doubtfully, and thought he was crazed. This was, of course, welcome to Alexandre, who always delighted to put himself in a theatrical attitude, and be the centre of a dramatic situation. He turned to his companion Bard :

"What were my words when proposing this expedition to you?"

"You asked," was the reply, "was I inclined to get myself shot with you."

"And what do you say now?"

"That I am ready still."

All were confounded at such gallantry. One of his friends now stepped forward, and offered to get him into Soissons, as he had a friend at the gates. Then Alexandre, always anticipating his D'Artagnan, raised his glass, and drank to his own return to them on the next evening. "Have dinner ready," he called to the host, "for twenty people, and it is to be eaten just the same, whether we are alive or dead—here are two hundred francs." The other answered he might pay on the morrow. "But if I should be shot?" "Then *I* shall pay." A shout arose, "Hurrah for Cartier!" Dumas drank off his wine, and, we might add, the act-drop fell.

It was now about eleven o'clock. The horses were put to, the chaise was waiting, and the bold trio, Dumas, Bard, and Hutin (who was to pass them through the gates), drove away on their daring expedition. By one o'clock they had reached the gates of Soissons, through which they were allowed to pass, "the door-keeper little dreaming," says Alexandre the great, "that he was admitting the Revolution."

They went straight to the house of Hutin's mother, where their first business was the manufacture of a huge tricolour flag. She contributed her blue and red curtains, with a tablecloth, and all the women of the household were set to work to sew the pieces together. By daybreak the task was completed. The pole, of course, gave no trouble, as the one from which the Bourbon white flag was floating would answer. "The flag-staff," as Dumas says, "had no political opinions."

The plan they had arranged was really Quixotic in its extravagance, and indeed seems almost incredible. Making all allowance for Dumas's bombast, it will be seen that at the most he has only been guilty of the novelist's exaggeration; and though at

the time the story of the adventure was all but scouted, it could not be disproved in its facts, which are given with the most minute details of dates, names, and places. It was settled that Bard and Hutin were to take the flag and contrive to get into the cathedral under pretence of seeing the sunrise from the tower. If the sacristan made any resistance he was to be flung over the parapet. Then having dragged down the white flag, and set the tricolour floating from the tower, Bard was to hurry on to lend his aid to Dumas, who would be engaged at the powder magazine. Such was the dashing plan of these three men.

They started at daybreak, and Dumas made his way to the Fort St. Jean, where a small pavilion, close to the gateway, was used as the magazine. He dared not attempt the gate, but stealing round, climbed up the wall cautiously, and took a peep into the fort. He saw two soldiers busy hoeing in a little garden at the corner. He let himself down again, looked over at the distant cathedral. He saw distinctly against the sky a dark outline of some figures; then the white flag, after being tossed about in an extraordinary fashion that could not have been owing to the wind, finally disappeared, and the tricolour took its place. Now was the moment: his companions had done their part. He slung his double-barrelled gun about him, and began to climb the wall. When he got to the top he saw the two soldiers staring with wonder at the strange flag on the cathedral, then, cocking both barrels of his gun, he leaped down and stood before them. One was named Captain Mollard; the other Sergeant Ragou. He advanced on them, presenting his piece, and made them a courteous but hurried speech, explaining who he was, and his errand. He was Monsieur Alexandre Dumas, son of General Dumas, &c. He came in the name of General Gérard to demand the surrender of the powder, and there was his order signed by the general, which he presented with one hand, and holding his cocked gun in the other. The pair were much taken back, and knew not what to do, when the colonel, D'Orcourt, who was in command, was seen approaching. The matter was explained to him, and after many courteous phrases, a treaty was arranged, by which the three officers promised their neutrality, and engaged to keep within doors. Thus the powder magazine would seem to have been captured by Dumas single-handed. It has the air of a very brilliant achievement,

and the picture of the hero alone in the fort, his finger on the triggers of his gun, courteously but firmly controlling his three opponents, is a most dramatic scene. When writing the account of his adventure, from which we take these particulars, however, Dumas forgets that in the official report, furnished to the *Moniteur* twenty-three years before, he had stated that three of his friends were waiting at the gate.

Thus successful, he opened the gate and found his friend Bard. To him he handed over the charge of the magazine, and went away to deal with the commandant of the fort, Liniers. He found this officer just risen, and discussing the news of the sudden appearance of the flag on the cathedral. Dumas laid down his gun at the door, introduced himself, and made his demand for an order to remove the powder. The other declined to acknowledge General Gérard's order, and said that there was scarcely any powder in the magazine. The commandant seemed, in fact, rather amused, and smiled scornfully when Dumas answered that the party at the magazine were his prisoners. Alexandre replying that he would go back at once and bring proof under their hand that the powder was there, made his bow, and retired. He flew back, found that he was right, and returned presently with satisfactory proof that a large quantity of powder was in the magazine. But when he reached the commandant's office he found that the party had been increased during his absence, and that Lenferna, an officer of gendarmes, and Bonvilliers, colonel of the Engineers, were there, in full uniform, and armed. The commandant addressed him in a sort of bantering tone, telling him that he had sent for these officers, who, with him, were in command of the town, in order that they might have the pleasure of hearing M. Dumas explain his mission. The young man saw that boldness was his only resource, and coolly told them that he had been engaged by Lafayette to bring the powder to Paris, or to lose his life, and that he insisted on the commandant handing over that powder to him. The officers passed on Gérard's order from one to the other with a sort of smiling contempt.

"And so," said the commandant, in the same tone—"so, single-handed, Monsieur Dumas—I think you said that was your name—you propose to force me to do this. You see that we are four."

The young man saw that matters were coming to a crisis, and took a prompt re-

solution. He stepped back, pulled his double-barrelled pistols from his pockets, and presented them at the startled party. "You are four," he said, "gentlemen. But we are five. If that order be not signed in five seconds, I give you my word of honour I will blow your brains out, beginning with the commandant's there!"

He owned he felt a little nervous, but he was determined.

"Take care," he went on; "I mean what I say. I am going to count. One—two—three—"

At this critical moment a side door was flung open, and a lady flung herself among them in a paroxysm of alarm.

"Agree! agree!" she cried. "Oh, this is another revolt of the negroes! Think of my poor father and mother, whom they murdered in St. Domingo!"

Alexandre owned that the lady's mistake was excusable, considering his own natural tint (deepened by violent browning from the sun), and the peculiar character of hair and voice. But we may wonder at the insensibility to ridicule which could prompt him to set down such a jest at his own expense.* The truth was, he was so filled with vanity, that all the nicer senses became blunted, and he was even unconscious of the roars of laughter which these foolish confidences produced. The commandant could not resist the entreaties of his wife. Alexandre declared that he had infinite respect for the lady, but entreated her husband to send her away, and let the men finish the business. The poor commandant protested that his self-respect must be respected. He could not decently yield to a single man. Alexandre then offered to sign a paper, to the effect that the order had been extorted at "the mouth of the pistol-barrel." "Or would you prefer," he added, "that I should fetch two or three of my companions, so that you should seem to have yielded to a more respectable force?" The commandant accepted this proposal, and Alexandre left him, bluntly declaring that no advantage must be taken of the delay or he would return and "blow all their brains out," and that the whole party must give their parole of honour that they would remain exactly as they were.

"Yes, yes," cried the lady. Alexandre made her a low bow, but declared that it was not her parole that he wanted. The commandant gave what was required of

* "O, mon ami, cède! c'est une seconde révolte des nègres."

him, and Alexandre hurrying away, speedily returned with two or three of his men, whom he placed in the court. Opening the window he called to them, and bade them inform the gentlemen inside that they were ready to fire on them at the first signal: an appeal answered by the significant sound of the cocking of guns. The commandant understood, and going to his desk, wrote out a formal order.

After this the rest was comparatively easy. The magazine was broken open, carts were procured and loaded, and at about five o'clock they were outside the town. Dumas was so exhausted that he sank down on the grass, under a hedge, and fell fast asleep. Roused up presently, he started on his journey, and by eight o'clock reached Villers-Cotterets, where they found the supper ready, which had been ordered the evening before. After a jovial meal they set out once more, and by three o'clock in the morning were close to Paris, at the post-house whence they had started. At nine he had presented himself, with his powder, at the Hôtel de Ville, having triumphantly accomplished the daring exploit he had undertaken.

When Alexandre told this adventure, there was many a shrug of the shoulders and loud-scolding laugh; such a romance as this was not thought worth serious refutation, as coming from so amusing and notorious a gasconader—an uncomplimentary appreciation which he owed to the incurable vanity which always made him set his own figure in the most effective and dramatic positions. But the story is perfectly true, abating some harmless exaggeration. It is to be found set forth in a modest official report addressed to Lafayette, published by his direction in the *Moniteur* of August the 9th, 1830, and signed by Dumas and the friends who assisted him in the expedition. The names of the various officers whom he forced to submit to him are given at length. When the memoirs were published in 1853, the son of the commandant, Liniers, did, indeed, come forward with an indignant "reclamation," to clear the memory of his father, who was then dead, but his testimony, for he was actually present at the scene in the commandant's cabinet, only confirms Dumas's account. The purport of the son's letter is merely this: that the town was already ripe for revolt before Dumas's arrival, and that when the latter returned with his friends, these were assumed to be chiefs of the National Guard, already known to be disaffected. In short, that the officer yielded not to Dumas,

but to an overpowering force behind him. His son describes Dumas parading his pistols, and menacing the commandant, but declares that the presence of the four officers armed, and intimidated, was a fiction of the novelist. He admits, however, that he himself and the secretary—with Madame de Liniers—were present. On the whole, the adventure may be accepted in all faith, and reflects credit on the great raconteur.

THE YELLOW FLAG.

BY EDMUND YATES,

AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "NOBODY'S FORTUNE," &c. &c.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER III. HUMPHREY STATHAM GROWS UNEASY.

WHAT has come over the ruling spirit of the offices in Change-alley? The partners in the great mercantile houses, whose ship-breaking is there carried on, cannot understand it, and the men in the tall fluffy hats, the frock-coats, and the shepherds' plaid trousers, whom no one would suspect to be the captains of merchant vessels fully certificated, long serviced, and ready to sail on any navigable water in the world, shrug their shoulders and mutter hoarsely to each other in the luncheon-room at Lloyd's, that "something must be up with Mr. Statham." The clerk who gives a maritime flavour to the office by wearing a pea-jacket, and who in default of any possible boating on the Thames or Serpentine is, during the winter, compelled to give vent to his nautical tendencies by vocal references at convivial supper parties to his Lovely Nan, his Polly of Portsmouth, and other of the late Mr. Dibdin's creations, opines that there is a young woman in the case, and that his governor has "got smote." Another of the clerks, an elderly man with a wooden leg and a melancholy mind, who had more than once failed in business on his own account, began to hint in a mysterious manner that he foresaw bankruptcy impending, and that they should all have to look out for new situations before the spring. Mr. Collins, to whom all the querists addressed themselves, and at whom all the indirect hints were levelled, said nothing; he even refused to admit to the general public that there was any perceptible difference in Mr. Statham's manner. Only in conjugal confidence, as he smoked his after-supper pipe in the neatly furnished parlour of his residence in Balaclava-buildings East,

Lower Clapham-road, he confessed to Mrs. C. that the chief had somehow lost his relish for business, and that he did not think Mr. S. was the man he had been.

If you had asked Humphrey Statham himself if there were any real foundation for these whispered hints and innuendoes, he would have laughed in your face. The forebodings of the melancholy man as to there being a decline in the business, he would have settled at once by a reference to Mr. Collins, who would have shown that never since he had been connected with the firm had its dealings been so large, and apparently so safe. As to Mr. Collins's connubial confidences, Humphrey Statham, if he had been made aware of them, would have said that they were equally ridiculous. Perhaps it was true that he did not care so much for business, was not so constantly at his desk, or such a dead hand at a bargain as he used to be, but it was natural enough that he should begin to slack off a little. He had been an idle dog in his early days, but ever since he settled down in the City, there were few men who had worked harder than he. The ten thousand pounds originally left him by his father he had more than trebled, and his personal disbursements certainly did not amount to more than six or seven hundred a year. Why should he slave away every moment of his life? Why should he be at the beck and call of every one who wanted his advice! They paid him for it, it was true! But he wanted something else besides payment now—amongst other things a certain amount of leisure for day-dreaming.

But what about the suggestion thrown out by the young gentleman of nautical tendency, the suggestion involving the idea that his principal's absence of mind was referable to his thoughts being occupied with a young woman? Day-dreaming was surely in favour of the nautical young gentleman's theory. When Humphrey Statham, after giving strict orders that he was not to be disturbed, no matter who might want him, threw himself back in his chair, and indulged in a long reverie, his thoughts reverted not to any business transactions in which he might have been engaged, but to the day when he first went to Rose Cottage in the assumed character of a charity agent, and to the person with whom he had the interview there. To Alice, as he saw her then for the first time, with the look of interest and anxiety in her pale, wistful face, with the tears standing in her large hazel eyes. How elegant and graceful were all her move-

ments; in how tender and woman-like a manner, regardless of her own trouble, which though not absolutely pronounced, she felt to be impending, she sympathised with him in the presumed object of his mission, and promised him aid! Then she would rise before his mind as he had seen her since, chilled, almost numbed with sorrow, caring for nothing, taking no interest in all that was proposed to her, though always grateful and recognisant. That look of hopeless, helpless sorrow haunted Humphrey Statham's life! Could it never be banished from her pale face? Would her eyes never brighten again with joy? The sorrowful look was a tribute to one who had cruelly deceived her, who had merited her bitterest hatred for the manner in which he had treated her. A word, probably, would disperse those clouds of grief, would turn her from a weeping mourner to an outraged woman, would show her how terrible was her present position, and would probably render her wildly anxious to escape from it. But to speak that word to Alice, to acquaint her with John Calverley's crime, would be to point out to her her own degradation, to inflict upon her the sharpest wounds that brutality could devise, to uproot her faith in honesty and goodness, and to send her forth cowering before the world. The man who could do this would prove himself Alice Claxton's direct enemy; it was Humphrey Statham's hope to take rank as one of her dearest friends, and in this hope he suffered and was silent.

One of her dearest friends! Nothing more than that! He had never dared to hope that he should be anything more to her. She was likely to remain constant to the memory of him whom she believed to have been her husband, and no one who had her welfare at heart would attempt to shake her in that constancy. With the exception of the doctors, indeed—who were not likely to trouble themselves—there was no one capable of giving her the information so fatal to her peace of mind, save the three tried friends who were occupying themselves in watching over her. Three tried friends? Yes, he thought he might say that, for this Frenchwoman, whom he had distrusted at first, seemed to be fulfilling her self-imposed duty with strictness and singleness of purpose. Humphrey Statham was not a man likely to be imposed upon by specious assurances unless they were carried out by corresponding acts. When Martin Gurwood had made him acquainted with Madame Du Tertre's pro-

posals, he had agreed to their acceptance, only as a temporary measure, and without any opinion of their lasting qualities. However, since Pauline's association with the Pollington-terrace household he had carefully watched her, and in spite as it were of himself, found himself compelled to give her credit for unselfish devotion to Alice's cause. What might be her motive, what the guiding-string of her conduct, so long as it involved no danger to Alice, was no concern of his. Humphrey Statham was too much a man of the world to ascribe it entirely to the sense of wishing to do her duty, or the gratification of an overweening affection which she had taken for the deserted girl. He argued rather that she herself had been the victim of some treachery or some disappointment similar to that unconsciously suffered by Alice, and that hence arose her sympathy for Mrs. Claxton, which, added to a dislike of the world, had induced her to seek for the position of Alice's companion. But this idea Humphrey Statham kept to himself, as being one rather likely to frighten a man of Martin Gurwood's simplicity, and to render him distrustful of the woman who was really of very great use and assistance to them.

Martin Gurwood had returned to Lullington, the affairs of his parish, as he stated, demanding his presence. Mrs. Calverley had demurred to his going, objecting to being left alone. Martin had employed a curate during his absence, she said, a man sufficiently qualified to attend to the spiritual wants of the farmers and persons of that kind, of whom the parish was composed. But Martin thought otherwise. He had been away quite long enough; too long, he argued, for a proper discharge of his duties. There might have been many occasions on which the parishioners who knew him well would have come to him for assistance, while they would have been diffident in appealing in the same way to a stranger. His mother retorted that, although he had not chosen to give her any explicit answer, she had made him an offer, the acceptance of which would remove him from Lullington, and then the farmers and labourers would be compelled to pocket their pride—if it could be called pride in such persons—and either seek aid from the stranger or go without. To which Martin had replied that if he were to yield up his living, his successor, from the mere fact of his position, would not be a stranger, but would be the proper person to apply to. So Martin Gurwood had gone back to

Lullington, leaving his mother highly incensed at his departure, and his friend, Humphrey Statham, had no one to talk to about Mrs. Claxton's beauty, patience, and forlorn condition.

It was on that account that Humphrey chiefly missed Martin. There was not much else in common between the two men; indeed, they had been acquainted for years without the acquaintance ripening into intimacy. From other persons and common friends Martin Gurwood had heard of Statham's cleverness and tact. On the occasion when he wanted a friend possessing such qualities he had sought out his old acquaintance, and found that rumour had not belied him. On his part Statham had to admire Martin Gurwood's simplicity and earnestness, and having the Hendon mystery to deal with, and a certain number of complications to steer through, the alliance between them was close and firm; but it had Alice Claxton and her welfare for its basis and its mainspring, and nothing more. Not that Humphrey Statham wanted anything more; he would have liked Martin Gurwood, however the connexion with him had been brought about; but associated as it was with Alice, this most recent friendship had a most appreciable value in his eyes.

Martin was gone, and there was no longer any one to whom Humphrey Statham could indulge in confidential converse, so he took to reveries and day-dreaming, and thus gave rise to all the odd talk and speculation about him which was rife in the City. He had settled with Martin before he left, however, that he should go up, for a time at least, twice or thrice a week perhaps, to Pollington-terrace, to see how Mrs. Claxton was getting on, and write fully and candidly to Martin his impressions of what he saw, and for a time nothing could be pleasanter reading to one interested in the success of the new establishment than these letters. Alice seemed gradually to be gaining health and strength, and if it could not be said that her spirits were much improved, certainly in that way she had suffered no relapse. Madame Du Tertre had come out infinitely more favourably than Humphrey had expected of her. She was unwearying in her devotion to her young friend, and her affectionate surveillance was just exactly what was wanted to a young woman in Alice's position. The matter of fending off neighbourly acquaintance, which they had so much dreaded, had been admirably managed by Madame Du Tertre, who had pleaded her young friend's

recent bereavement and ill health as an excuse for their not entering into society ; while she had rendered herself most popular by the courteous way in which she had made the announcement, by her kindness to the children, and her *savoir faire* in general. Martin Gurwood read all this with as great a pleasure as Humphrey Statham wrote it. All things taken in consideration, nothing could be progressing more favourably than the establishment in Pollington-terrace, built though it was, as both men knew, upon a quicksand, and liable to be engulfed at any moment.

These visits to Pollington-terrace were the holidays in Humphrey Statham's life, the days to be marked with a white stone, to be dwelt upon both in anticipation and recollection—days to be made much of, too, and not to be carelessly enjoyed. Humphrey Statham, since his early youth a prudent man, was not inclined to be prodigal even of such delights. Immediately after Martin's departure for the country, he had been a pretty constant visitor at Pollington-terrace, for the purpose, of course, of keeping his friend properly posted up in all the movements of its denizens, but after a little he thought it better to put in an appearance less frequently, and he mortified himself accordingly. One night, after a ten days' interval, Humphrey thought he should be justified in paying his respects to the lady, and providing himself with subject-matter for another letter to-morrow. Being, as has been said, a man of worldly wisdom, it was his habit to dismiss his cab at the end of the terrace, and proceed on foot to his destination, hansom cabs being looked upon by the staid neighbourhood as skittish vehicles, generally subversive of morals. When Humphrey reached the house, he saw upon the window-blind the unmistakable shadow of a man's head. Had Martin Gurwood suddenly returned to town ? No—as the thought flashed across his mind, the head turned, showing him the profile, with a hook nose, and a flowing beard, with neither of which could the vicar of Lullington be accredited. Humphrey Statham stopped short, scarcely daring to believe his senses. An instant's reflection convinced him of his folly. What rule was there forbidding these ladies to receive their acquaintances in their own house ? Who was he to be startled at the unfamiliar silhouette on a window-blind ? Why should such a sight cause him to stop suddenly in his walk, and set his heart thumping wildly beneath his waistcoat ? Martha, the little maid-of-all-work, was at

all events not influenced by anything that had occurred. She grinned, when she saw Mr. Statham, in her usual friendly manner, and introduced him into the parlour with her accustomed briskness of bearing.

Mrs. Claxton was there, so was Madame Du Tertre, so was the original of the silhouette on the window-blind. A tall man this, with a hooked nose, and a blonde silky beard, and an easy, pleasant manner, introduced as Madame Du Tertre's cousin, Mr. Henrich Wetter. A deuced sight too easy a manner, thought Humphrey Statham to himself, as he quietly remarked the way in which the new-comer paid to Alice attentions, with which no fault could be found, but which were unmistakably annoying to the looker-on, and to that looker-on the behaviour of the strange visitor was so ineffably, so gallingly patronising ! Mr. Statham, did he catch the name rightly ? Was it Mr. Humphrey Statham, of Change-alley ? Oh, of course, then, he was well known to everybody. They were neighbours in the City ! He was very pleased to make Mr. Statham's personal acquaintance !

"Confound his patronising airs," thought Humphrey Statham to himself. "Who is this German Jew—he is a German, undoubtedly, and probably a Jew—that he should vaunt himself in this manner ? And how, in the name of fortune, did he find himself in this house ? Madame Du Tertre's cousin, eh ! This Wetter, if he be, as he probably is, of the firm of Stutterheim and Wetter, ought to have had sufficient respect for his family to have prevented his cousin from taking the position occupied by Madame Du Tertre. Bah ! what nonsense was he talking now ? They had all reason to be grateful that Madame Du Tertre was in that position, and she was just the woman who would keep her family in ignorance of the circumstances under which she had achieved it."

Exactly as he thought ? The subsequent conversation showed him how wrong he had been. It turned accidentally enough upon the number of foreigners domesticated in England, a country where, as Mr. Wetter remarked, one would have thought they would have experienced more difficulty in making themselves at home than in almost any other.

"Not that," he said, pleasantly, "not that I have any reason to complain ; but I am now a naturalised Englishman, and all my hopes and wishes—mere business hopes and wishes; alas, Mrs. Claxton, I am a solitary man, and have no other matters of

interest—are centred in this country. It was here, though I confess with astonishment, that I found my cousin, Madame Du Tertre, a permanent resident."

"You were not aware, then, Monsieur Wetter," said Statham, finding himself addressed, "that your cousin was in England?"

"Family differences, common to all nations, had unfortunately separated us, and for some years I had not heard of Pau—Palmyre's movements."

"You can easily understand, Mr. Statham," said Pauline, speaking between her set teeth, "that as my cousin's social position was superior to mine, I was averse to bringing myself under his notice."

"We will say nothing about that," said Mr. Wetter, with his pleasant smile. "I think Mr. Statham will agree with me, that the social position which brings about a constant intercourse with Mrs. Claxton is one which any member of our sex would, to say the least of it, be proud?"

Humphrey Statham glanced round the circle as these words were uttered. Alice looked uncomfortable; Madame Du Tertre savage and defiant; Mr. Wetter bland and self-possessed. There was silence for a few minutes. Then Pauline said: "You have been a stranger for some time, Mr. Statham; we had been wondering what had become of you."

"I am delighted to think that the void caused by my absence has been so agreeably filled," said Humphrey Statham, with a bow towards Mr. Wetter. The next minute he cursed his folly for having made the speech, seeing by Wetter's look that he had thoroughly appreciated its origin.

"The regret at your absence indicated by Madame Du Tertre I fully share," he said, with a polite smile. "It is my great loss that I have not met you before in this charming society. At this dull season of the year, when every one is out of town, I need scarcely say what a godsend it has been to me to have been permitted to pass an evening occasionally with two such ladies; and the knowledge that I might have had the chance of an introduction to Mr. Humphrey Statham would have been indeed an additional inducement to drag me from my dreary solitude."

That was an uncomfortable evening for all persons present. Even to Alice, dull, distraught, and occupied with her own sorrow, there was an evident incongruity in the

meeting of the two men. Pauline was furious, partly at Wetter's cool treatment of her, partly at the idea that Statham had cross-questioned her as to why she had permitted the intimacy with Wetter to arise. Wetter himself was annoyed at Statham's presence on the scene, while Humphrey Statham went away sorry and sick at heart at all he had seen and heard. The old stories concerning Wetter floating about society had reached his ears, and the recollection of them rushed full upon him as he sat in the cab on his homeward drive. "How had this man managed to get a footing in Alice's house? A footing he had evidently obtained, for he spoke of frequent visits there, and his manner was that of an habitué of the house. He was introduced as Madame Du Tertre's cousin; but if that were so, that fact, instead of inspiring confidence in him, was simply sufficient to create distrust of Madame Du Tertre. He was the last man with whom any woman, young and inexperienced, more especially any woman in Alice Claxton's position, should be brought in contact."

What was best to be done? For an answer to this question Humphrey Statham racked his brain that night. In any case he must write a full account of what he had seen, and of the inference he had drawn therefrom, to Martin Gurwood. Martin may not be able to give him any advice, but it was due to him to let him know what had occurred. He, in his simplicity, may see nothing in it; but at all events he must never be able to plead that he was unadvised and unwarned. So before retiring to his rest that night, Humphrey Statham sat down and wrote to his friend a full account of his visit, with a candid statement of the fears and reflections which the presence of such a man as Mr. Wetter in Alice Claxton's household had aroused in him.

"To you," he said, "to you who have nothing in your life to repair, all this may seem very strained; but I, who have passé par là, and have failed to save one whom I might have saved, know what a sting a failure may come to mean for all the days of a man's life."

"Nothing in my life to repair!" cried Martin Gurwood, after he had read the letter, clasping his hands above his head. "Great Heaven, if there were but any place for repentance, any possibility of reparation!"

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